

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the slide, creating a modern, layered effect.

The
Right Approach
towards ICAP
Exams



Being a student, you need to take a couple of steps that will guide you towards the right path and assist you to manage the **fear** of exams which can affect you negatively.



Nothing is impossible:

You need to be very clear that nothing is impossible. In fact, the word impossible itself says that I am possible. Surround yourself with positive people, discuss your concerns with those who have succeeded in their exams, and read the success stories of those students who scored distinctions.

This activity will create positive energy in you and will guide you towards designing the right approach to attempt your exams.

Setting higher targets:

While preparing for exams, you should set higher targets for yourself. This will motivate you to work harder and hence will increase chances of you succeeding your exams.

So as a starting point, you should always aim to perform better than your class mates and your friends, and aim at scoring distinction in the exams you are preparing for.

Selection of the right mentor

Before starting to prepare for your exams, you are going to need a mentor and a guide. The selection of the right mentor is going to matter a lot in the end.

That mentor can be a senior who has passed the relevant exam, your teacher, your parents or your elder siblings if they are also in the same field.

While selecting your mentor, the key to remember is that your mentor should be one who motivates you or creates self-confidence and self-belief in you.

Selection of the study material

You need to be focused while selecting the study material. ICAP syllabus indicates recommended resources, so you should always focus on the study material recommended by ICAP, as only the right and relevant study material is going to help you achieve your objective.

Going through irrelevant details is going to be waste time and is not likely to be much helpful in achieving your ultimate objective. You should be fully aware of what is included in the syllabus and to what extent.

My style was to go through the syllabus of ICAP thoroughly and discuss with my instructors about relevant and useful study material.

I also used to discuss with students who had recently passed their exams and followed their suggestions about the selection of study material.

Plan your success:

Planning has a fundamental part in directing the efforts towards success. You should manage your time and plan how to tackle the final exams.

There are certain areas in a subject that are more relevant and more important and have more weightage in the final exams. Others are less important and have less weightage.

Hence a structured effort should spend more time on areas with more weightage as compared to less important areas.

Students should discuss with their mentors about the weightage and structure of exams. This activity will enable them to plan about their exams and carry out controlled efforts towards enabling them to be successful.

I used to prepare a timetable and updated it on a frequent basis after attempting past papers as that enabled me to understand the subject more deeply and carry out a structured effort towards exams. You should never rely on guess work and always cover full content of the syllabus.

Time management:

Time management is of fundamental importance in carrying out a structured effort. A six month gap between exams is good time if well spent.

Students should manage their time between family, friends, professional commitments, classes and studying for exams.

This is very important as while appearing for final exams, students are also engaged in either articles or post article jobs and hence it is very difficult for them to manage their time and at the end, they may not be able to carry out structured and required efforts towards exams. I used to give at least one or two hours on daily basis to my exam preparation while I was engaged in articleship and post article job.

Practice, practice and practice:

I always recommend students to practice ICAP past papers before attempting the actual exam. Students should carry out time based written practice of past papers and then compare their answers with the answers of the examiner and then go through the examiners' comments.

This activity will induce self-evaluation and enable students to identify weak areas that need improvement.

I used to practice past papers of past 10 attempts at least three to four times before my exams.

Attempt mock exams:

Students should try to give mock exams held by various teachers and then discuss their performance with instructors, as this will enable them to work on their weaker areas before the actual exams.

I always tried to give as many mock exams as possible and discuss my answers with my instructor as that enabled me to identify areas on which I had to put in more effort.

Manage exam stress and negative feelings that surround you ahead of exams:

Almost everyone feels nervous or experiences some anxiety when faced with a test or an exam. In fact, it is unusual to find a student who doesn't approach a big test without a degree of anxiety.

Many students experience some nervousness or apprehension before, during, or even after an exam. It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test.

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety. Test anxiety is very common among students. It can interfere with your studies, and you may have difficulty learning and remembering what you need to know for the test.

Further, too much anxiety may block your performance, and you may face difficulty demonstrating what you know during the test. Here are a few tips for students that will enable them to manage exam stress:

Step 1: Pay attention to your self-talk

Thoughts are what we say to ourselves without speaking out loud (self-talk). We all have our own way of thinking about things, and how we think has a big effect on how we feel.

When we think that something bad will happen - such as failing a test - we feel anxious. For example, imagine you have a math test in class. If you think you are going to fail, you will feel scared and anxious.

But, if you think you can pass, you will feel calm. Often, we are unaware of our thoughts, but because they have such a big impact on how we feel, it is important to start paying attention to what we are saying to ourselves.

Step 2: Identify thoughts that lead to feelings of anxiety

It can take some time and practice to identify the specific thoughts that make you anxious, so here are some tips. Pay attention to your shifts in anxiety, no matter how small.

When you notice yourself getting more anxious, that is the time to ask yourself:

- What am I thinking right now?
- What is making me feel anxious?
- What am I worried will happen?
- What bad thing do I expect to happen?

Step 3: Challenge your anxious thinking

Thinking something doesn't mean it's true or that it will happen. For example, thinking that you will fail a test doesn't mean you will actually fail. Often, our thoughts are just guesses and not actual facts.

Therefore, it is helpful to challenge your anxious thoughts because they can make you feel like something bad will definitely happen, even when it is highly unlikely. Sometimes, our anxiety is the result of falling into thinking traps. Thinking traps are unfair or overly negative ways of seeing things.

You should challenge the negative thoughts that come to your mind and cope them with positive thoughts and self-belief. A mentor can be of help in some matters.

Here's an example to help
you challenging your negative
thinking:

You have an important test tomorrow and have been feeling quite anxious about it. You may think: **I'm going to fail the test tomorrow.** To challenge this thought, you can ask yourself the following questions:

Am I falling into a thinking trap?

Yes, I have fallen into the trap of fortune-telling, predicting things will turn out badly before the event even takes place. But I still think I'm going to fail.

Am I basing my judgment on the way I ‘feel’ instead of the ‘facts’?

I might feel like I’m going to fail, but there is no evidence to support it. I’m prepared for the test, and I have passed other tests at school before.

Am I 100% sure that I will fail? No, but what if I do this time?

Well, what's the worst that could happen? If the worst did happen, what could I do to cope with it? The worst that could happen is that I fail the test. It'll be disappointing, but it won't be the end of the world. I can go for extra help to find out what went wrong, and ask my teacher if there is anything I can do to improve my mark.

Hence, being alert and anxious to some extent is good because it is required to be alert and perform well but at the same time, it is important that you do not let negative feelings, thoughts, fear of exams and your anxiety overcome you as that will affect your performance negatively.

Prayers:

Well, to be successful in all phases of life you need luck and a lot of prayers. So, request your parents, teachers, family and friends to pray for your success. Offer your prayers five times a day and seek help and blessing of Allah as that is important in all phases of life.

Always attempt full paper:

Time management during three hours exam is of significant importance. Chances of scoring pass marks from attempting 100% of the paper are more than that from attempting 60% or 70% of the total questions.

Writing does matters:

If your examiner is not able to read what you have written you are unlikely to score any marks. My advice to students is to try and attempt the paper in neat and readable writing.

For numerical questions students are advised to always show workings as the examiner is keen to see how you arrived at a solution. For theoretical questions, the examiner is keen to know the thought process behind your conclusion.

Students should answer theoretical answers in small paragraphs and for questions carrying more than 8 marks, the answer should contain the introduction, subject matter and conclusion paragraphs.

Relax after exams:

Once you have made all the efforts and done your best, you need to relax. Give yourself a break and start planning and preparing for the next stage of your exams. As a student, try to forget about your previous attempt and always plan for the future.

Students tend to discuss answers with each other, but that only puts them under pressure and affects their performance in the exam the next day. So try to forget your previous exam as you have done what you could have, and now it is time to plan for the future.

Never lose hope:

As a student you should do what is in your hands and leave the rest on Allah. Continue to work hard and one day you will succeed. Hard work always pays off.

If unfortunately you fail in any attempt, read ICAP's suggested solution and examiners comments. This will enable you to identify your mistakes that caused your failure.

Every time I failed, I
read examiners
answer and comments
and the answer was
always there for me
to why I failed.

Try, try and try and
I guarantee you
success provided
you remain
motivated and
consistent.

Conclusion

In the end, I wish you best of luck for your exams. Remember, nothing is impossible and hard work always pays back. One day you can and you will become a qualified and respected chartered accountant. Thumbs up!

Thank
You!